

TOMORROW: Rain High 65°/Low 49°

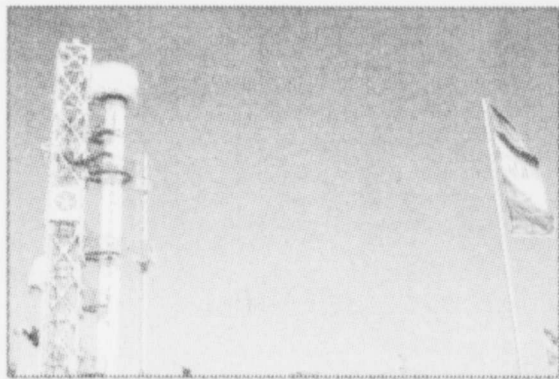
MUSTANG DAILY

CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY



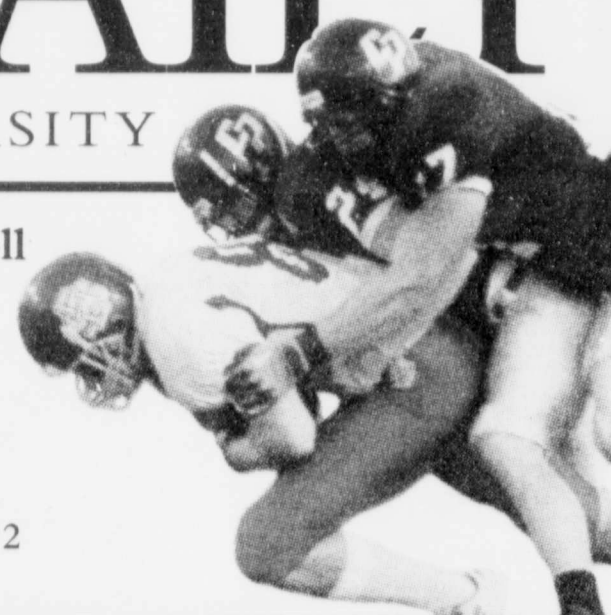
Comic dwells into Batman's past.

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Iran launches first satellite into space.

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Kyle Shotwell returns to Cal Poly as defensive assistant.

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Volume LXXII, Number 85

Wednesday, February 4, 2009

www.mustangdaily.net

Are electives necessary? Cal Poly says they are

Ashley Ciullo

MUSTANG DAILY

Have you ever wondered why colleges require students to take elective courses to receive a degree? How will a class on the social construction of whiteness or a bowling elective help a student grow and succeed in the future?

A non-partisan nationwide network called Americans for Limited Government (ALG) said that eliminating some classes from course requirements will save taxpayers millions of dollars by shortening the time needed to graduate from California State University and University of California schools to two years.

The state university system demands a total of 180 units to graduate with a degree: approximately 60 general education units, 60 units in major-related courses and 60 elective units. Degree requirements vary because different majors have different courses to educate students in their

area of study. Engineering, for example, has a substantial number of major courses, so electives are reduced in an effort to balance the 180-unit degree requirement.

Cal Poly Provost Robert Koob said general education courses are intended to give students a well-rounded education and the ability to see life from different perspectives.

"Brain research is showing that college years are when human beings, on the average, evolve," he said.

"There are many ways of looking at the world and the way it fits together seems to change for us, so it's important to think like a musician, mathematician, scientist, historian and social scientist."

He also wants to give students a way to experience multiple fields of study.

"Not everybody is always going to be the same thing forever; we give people an opportunity to explore dif-

see Electives, page 2

Fund could increase green programs at Poly

Joshua Ayers

MUSTANG DAILY

Cal Poly Associated Students Inc. is working on the infancy stage of a green fund that has the potential to generate hundreds of thousands of dollars for future student-led campus sustainability projects.

The fund, called The Green Initiative Fund (TGIF), would pool a \$5 per-quarter student fee into a monetary reserve to be used for senior projects, internships and energy efficiency projects through Cal Poly.

Hartrich said that the current plan is to draw the fee from the potential \$100 to \$300 increase in college based fees that is awaiting approval from the College Fee Advisory Committee this week.

"If the fees don't go through, then obviously TGIF would fail," Hartrich said, "but there are other avenues."

One of those "avenues" would be to try to pass the proposed fund as a referendum, meaning students would vote to implement the program much in the same way the new recreation center was approved last spring.

ASI President Angela Kramer and Hartrich aren't taking any chances. The duo has already begun drafting a proposal to be included in the upcoming March referendum as a precaution.

Kramer, who has built her student administration to focus heavily on sustainability, said that she has seen interest at the university's administrative level.

"President Baker is a huge supporter of sustainable projects especially when they're student-led projects," Kramer said. "He really sees this as great opportunity for students to have access to funds to actually put on events or build models or do research or anything that's appropriate to their field and I would 100 percent agree."

Hartrich estimated that TGIF could acquire close to \$300,000 per year if it passes, and if it is put into play at Cal Poly, Kramer said that students could apply to use the money for senior projects that plan to use a sustainability framework.

"(It would be) for projects that

see Green, page 2

Exploring a sustainable future



RACHEL GLAS MUSTANG DAILY

Students and community members attended the Sustainability Project showcase yesterday evening as part of Focus the Nation. Both students and clubs displayed over 15 different sustainable projects. Projects ranged from water conservation and electric vehicles to sustainable dwellings.

Education chief: Calif. system 'precarious'

Juliet Williams

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SACRAMENTO (AP) — Warning that its public schools are in a "precarious" state, California's top education official on Tuesday called for more money even as lawmakers were considering billions of dollars in cuts to help address the state's massive budget deficit.

Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell said California's system of funding education, in which money is directed at dozens of specialized programs enshrined over decades, isn't working.

"The state of public education in California is precarious," he said during his annual state of education address. "Beyond the immediate crisis, and even more alarming to me, is the long-term future of our common education system."

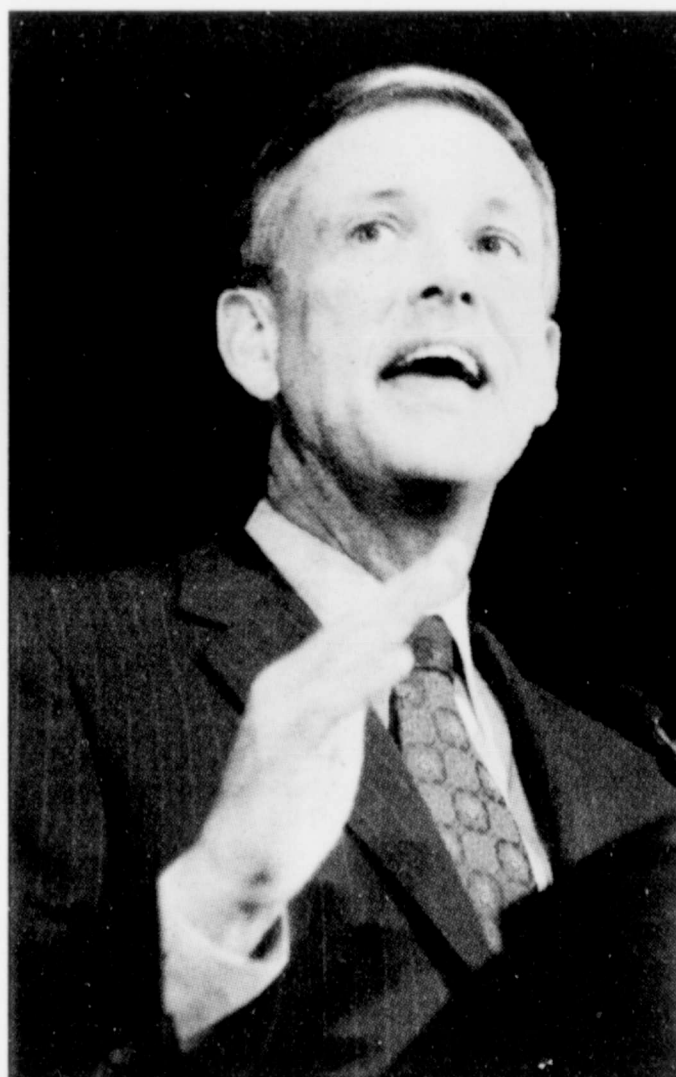
California spends about \$48 billion a year on K-12 education, almost half its general fund, but its students fare poorly when compared to their peers in other states on standardized tests. The state's schools also have a persistent gap in achievement rates: white, Asian and wealthier students far outperform students who are black, Hispanic and poor.

O'Connell said without more money, California will ensure a two-tiered education system for its students.

"Families who struggle financially will be left with a substandard system, one that cannot possibly prepare their children to be able to compete in a changing global economy," he said.

His comments came as Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and legislative leaders are struggling with a budget deficit

see Education, page 2



RICH PEDRONCELLI ASSOCIATED PRESS

Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell discusses the condition of education in California during his State of Education address in Sacramento, Calif., Tuesday.

Green

continued from page 1

students have dreamed of but have had to wait until after graduation to get their hands (on)," Kramer said.

UC Santa Barbara passed a similar referendum in the spring of 2006. A vote for TGIF at that school was approved by 74 percent of the undergraduate student vote and 82 percent of the graduate student vote.

UCSB utilizes a \$2.60 per-quarter fee to generate money for its TGIF and a grant making committee evaluates proposals and then approves or rejects funding for particular projects. Since TGIF won over voters in 2006, UCSB has awarded almost \$300,000 to 21 sustainability-based projects.

"It generates about \$160,000 a year," said Jill Richardson, UCSB's TGIF grants manager and sustainability coordinator. "(Funding) can be (used) for any kind of projects that helps UCSB reduce its environmental impact."

UCSB, which is entering its third funding cycle, saw a 60 percent increase in applications during the current cycle, according to Richardson. The applications were due last week.

"The total requests were just under a million dollars, so we're going to have to whittle that down over the next few weeks," she said.

Some of the projects UCSB's TGIF has funded included installation of waterless urinals, mounting gas meters on buildings and classes that teach creating business plans geared toward sustainability.

Cal Poly's conceptual design for its TGIF closely models that of UCSB's.

Should TGIF be put into effect, Hartrich said a grant-writing committee, headed by a full-time grant writer, would be employed to pursue matching funds for green projects.

ASI is currently collecting student opinions about TGIF through online petitions at the temporary Web site www.tgifcalpoly.com.

"It's more or less to see what students support," Hartrich said.

Hartrich's goal is to have 3,000 petitions for TGIF, but as of Tuesday, only 132 petitions had been filled out.

"We started the petition set in the fall but it was delayed for a while," Hartrich said. "We just started it (again) last week so we still have a lot to do."

Of the 132 petitions filled out, 103 people said that Cal Poly was not doing enough to promote sustainability on campus. In addition, 49 reported that they would be willing to pay quarterly fees in support of a sustainability program and 71 said yes, depending on the amount.

"So far we have some pretty good results and it's a good depiction of what students want," Hartrich said.

Education

continued from page 1

estimated at \$42 billion through June 2010. Whatever compromise they reach is sure to include billions of dollars in cuts to public schools.

Sacramento has in a sense put the shackles on schools in California.

—State Sen. Gloria Romero

Senate education committee chairwoman

Education interest groups are at odds over what programs should be given a lower priority.

Schwarzenegger, a Republican, has proposed giving school districts more spending flexibility that would allow them to spend the money where local officials decide it is most needed.

The state's largest teachers union, the California Teachers Association, is mobilizing against any plan that would allow local school administrators

to divert money from a program that keeps class sizes smaller — and more teachers employed — in kindergarten through third grade.

Democrats have proposed suspending laws that require schools to buy updated textbooks and make repairs in some of the poorest school districts.

O'Connell, a Democrat, stopped short of choosing sides in his speech but said major revisions to the funding structure and priorities are needed.

Assemblyman Bob Huff, R-Diamond Bar, said he agreed with O'Connell's call to streamline the state's complicated financing system but said it's unrealistic to ask for more money as the state hurtles toward insolvency.

"In a perfect world, I'd love to see more money for education. But we're not in a perfect world," said Huff, vice chairman of the Senate education committee. "Every sector of the budget is taking a hit this year. I'd like to see us do a better job with the money we have in education."

State Sen. Gloria Romero, chairwoman of the Senate education committee, said the state should use its unprecedented funding crisis to restructure the state Department of Education and decentralize state programs.

"Sacramento has in a sense put the shackles on schools in California," said the Los Angeles Democrat, a likely candidate for school superintendent in 2010.

Electives

continued from page 1

ferent areas within the university," Koob said.

ALG media outreach director Alexander Rosenwald said some elective courses shouldn't be offered at the expense of taxpayer dollars.

When there is a budget cut, he said he would expect the chancellor of education to put a primary focus on fundamental courses.

"You can keep the quality of education high while being cost-effective at the same time," he said. "Eliminating electives would take college students a

lot less money and time to graduate."

Cal Poly President Warren Baker said some people have an assumption that electives are useless and don't help students lead fulfilling lives.

"In this country, we have diverse higher education programs," he said.

"The public believes that providing a college education contributes to developing the background and the knowledge that people need to promote a democracy and understand the relationship among various conditions.

"You have major courses, support courses and general education, and general education gives you the ability to understand what the political, social and cultural impact is likely to be for the

project that you're working on."

Koob has plans to save the university money without eliminating any general education or elective requirements.

"The average Cal Poly student takes about two quarters longer than their program of study says it would be required of them in order to get a degree, so I would like to see that shortened," he said.

"You need more education, not less, to enter today's society as a contributing citizen. Most people, 25 years after graduating, will say that general education and different perspectives learned in college helped them deal with unexpected situations they ran across in their lifetime."

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Briefs

State

REDWOOD CITY, Calif. (AP) — A judge has sentenced a Capitola man to six months in jail for allegedly threatening scientists who use animals for research.

Prosecutors say Justin Bhagat Thind made several calls to two University of California, San Francisco researchers telling them they would die like they made the animals suffer.

Thind pleaded no contest in December to a felony charge of threatening a government employee and a misdemeanor phone threat charge. Investigators say they traced the calls to Thind's cell phone.

The 33-year-old faces similar charges in Marin County over additional calls to UCSF researchers.

SACRAMENTO (AP) — The rest of California's economy was slumping, but the state remained a treasure-trove last fall for campaign consultants and others who make money off political races.

Led by the heated fight over gay marriage, campaigns spent \$227.2 million to pass or defeat 11 propositions on California's November ballot, according to post-election contribution reports that had to be filed with the secretary of state's office by midnight Tuesday.

That's short of the record but still represents a huge investment in television and radio advertisements and other campaign spending.

National

TULSA, Okla. (AP) — The Cherokee Nation wants a federal judge to decide whether descendants of the tribe's former black slaves, known as freedmen, have a federal right to citizenship in the tribe.

In the five-page complaint filed Tuesday in U.S. District Court in Tulsa, the nation argues that because of the U.S. government's modification of an 1866 treaty it had with the tribe, descendants of freedmen are not entitled to federal citizenship rights. It names several freedmen descendants and the U.S. Department of the Interior, among others, as defendants.

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — A black state senator is pushing a bill that would require South Carolina cities and counties to give their workers a paid day off for Confederate Memorial Day or lose millions in state funds.

Democratic Sen. Robert Ford's bill won initial approval from a Senate subcommittee Tuesday. It would force county and municipal governments to follow the schedule of holidays used by the state, which gives workers 12 paid days off, including May 10 to honor Confederate war dead. Mississippi and Alabama also recognize Confederate Memorial Day.

International

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) — Militants blew up a bridge in northwest Pakistan on Tuesday, cutting the major supply line for U.S.-led troops in Afghanistan with an explosion that turned the narrow span into a jagged metal "V."

It was the latest, and perhaps most serious, attempt to block supplies to the U.S.-led mission against the Taliban.

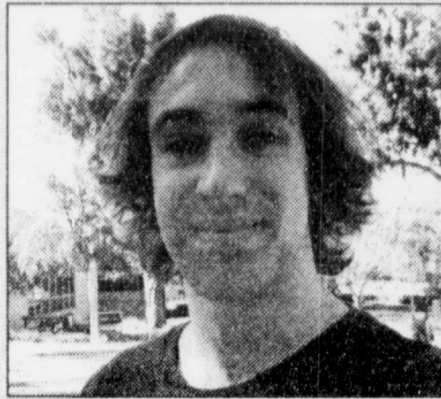
The length of the slender metal bridge slanted to one side and was blocked by an overturned truck that spilled dozens of dusty bags into the pavement. Traffic from the bare hills continued on foot, with Afghans and Pakistanis, including women in burqas, hurrying their baggage over the dry riverbed.

TORONTO (AP) — Three Chinese detainees cleared for release from the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay have applied for political asylum in Canada, lawyers for the men and a group sponsoring them said Tuesday.

The men are among 17 Chinese Muslims called Uighurs (pronounced WEE'-gurz) at Guantanamo. The U.S. has cleared them for release but fears they could be mistreated or even tortured if they are turned over to China, which alleges they are terrorists who belong to an outlawed separatist group.

WORD ON THE STREET

"What would you do if you found a python in your backyard?"

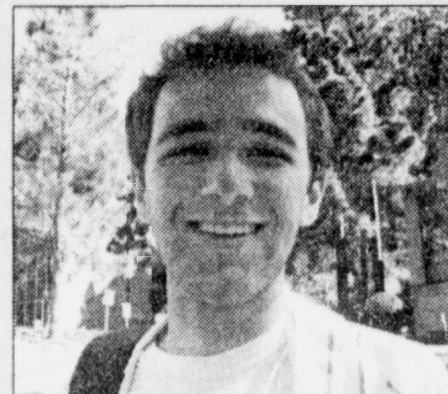


"Probably call animal control services and keep the door closed."

—Sam Gardner,
civil engineering senior

"I'd probably go back inside the house and call someone (and) maybe I'd take a picture of it."

—Jonathan Presley,
biology chemistry sophomore



"I would probably flip out trying to figure out how it got there then go online to figure out if it's going to eat me, then maybe I'd pick it up."

—Samantha Anderson,
biology freshman

"I'd probably call the zoo or something, or National Geographic."

—Danielle Ruais,
horticulture junior



COMPILED AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY CASSANDRA KEYSE

Jet lands safely after bird hits engine



FRANK CROWE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In this picture provided by airline passenger Frank Crowe, workers inspect the blades of an engine on a United Airlines Boeing 757 at the Denver airport Tuesday.

Dan Elliott
ASSOCIATE PRESS

A United Airlines jet returned safely to the Denver airport Tuesday after a bird was sucked into one of its engines shortly after takeoff.

The engine that was struck continued to operate and the second engine wasn't affected, airline spokeswoman Megan McCarthy said. A passenger said the bird hit the right engine.

None of the 151 passengers and crew was injured.

The Boeing 757 had just left for San Francisco when the bird strike happened. McCarthy said the pilot's decision to return to the airport was a precaution.

A US Airways jet splash-landed in New York's Hudson River on Jan. 15 after a collision with a flock of birds knocked out both engines. All 155 see Jet, page 4

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"But where you've got federal money involved, taxpayers' money involved, TARP money involved, and the way they have spent it, with no accountability is getting close to being criminal."



a&e
arts and entertainment

Arts and Entertainment Editor: Emille Egger
Arts and Entertainment Designer: Milena Krayzbukh

Kennedy Center to help struggling arts groups



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Michael M. Kaiser, president of Kennedy Center, is shown in this courtesy photo from at the Al-Kasaba theatre and cinema-theque in Ramallah, West Bank, Palestine. Kaiser announced an unprecedented "Arts in Crisis" initiative on Tuesday to offer free assistance to managers of nonprofit performing arts organizations across the country.

Brett Zongker
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — With the nation's nonprofit arts organizations suffering in the dismal economy, the stalwart John F Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is offering crisis consulting to see them through.

The arts aren't at the top of many lawmakers' lists for a federal bailout. So Michael Kaiser, the Kennedy Center's president, announced an unprecedented "Arts in Crisis" initiative on Tuesday to offer free assistance to performing arts managers across the country.

He said his team could devote significant time and up to \$500,000 in expenses to provide emergency planning for fundraising, budgeting, marketing or other strategies as box office revenues decline and donations and endowments run dry.

"I worry about many, many arts organizations disappearing," Kaiser said. "My concern is: Are they cutting the right things? Are they going to survive? And are they going to be able to compete for resources when there are fewer resources to compete for?"

Orchestras, ballets and opera companies from California to Maryland and even New York City are facing huge budget deficits. The Los Ange-

les Opera is laying off 17 people, cutting salaries and will stage fewer performances this year. The Miami City Ballet is cutting eight dancers. The Baltimore Opera has declared bankruptcy.

The nonprofit group Americans for the Arts estimates 10,000 arts organizations could disappear in 2009. In New York, the Dance Theatre of Harlem, which rebounded from a financial crisis that closed its doors in 2004, is cutting salaries for its entire staff by 10 percent to avoid layoffs and programming cuts.

"There's a silent erosion happening. That sort of makes the whole situation a little more daunting," said Laveen Naidu, executive director of the Harlem dance company co-founded by Arthur Mitchell. "When we look up after the dust has settled, I think that we are going to be sorry that we weren't more proactive sooner."

Kaiser charted an emergency financial restructuring for the Harlem group to reopen in 2004 and continues to consult with Naidu, a dancer who was new to arts management when he took over the company's administra-

see Kennedy, page 6

Multicultural Center to host poet Prentice Powell for "Another Type of Groove"

Ashley Ciullo
MUSTANG DAILY

This month's "Another Type of Groove" will feature slam poet Prentice Powell, whose poetry focuses on issues like social justice and race. His performance will be among many campus events in honor of February's Black History Month.

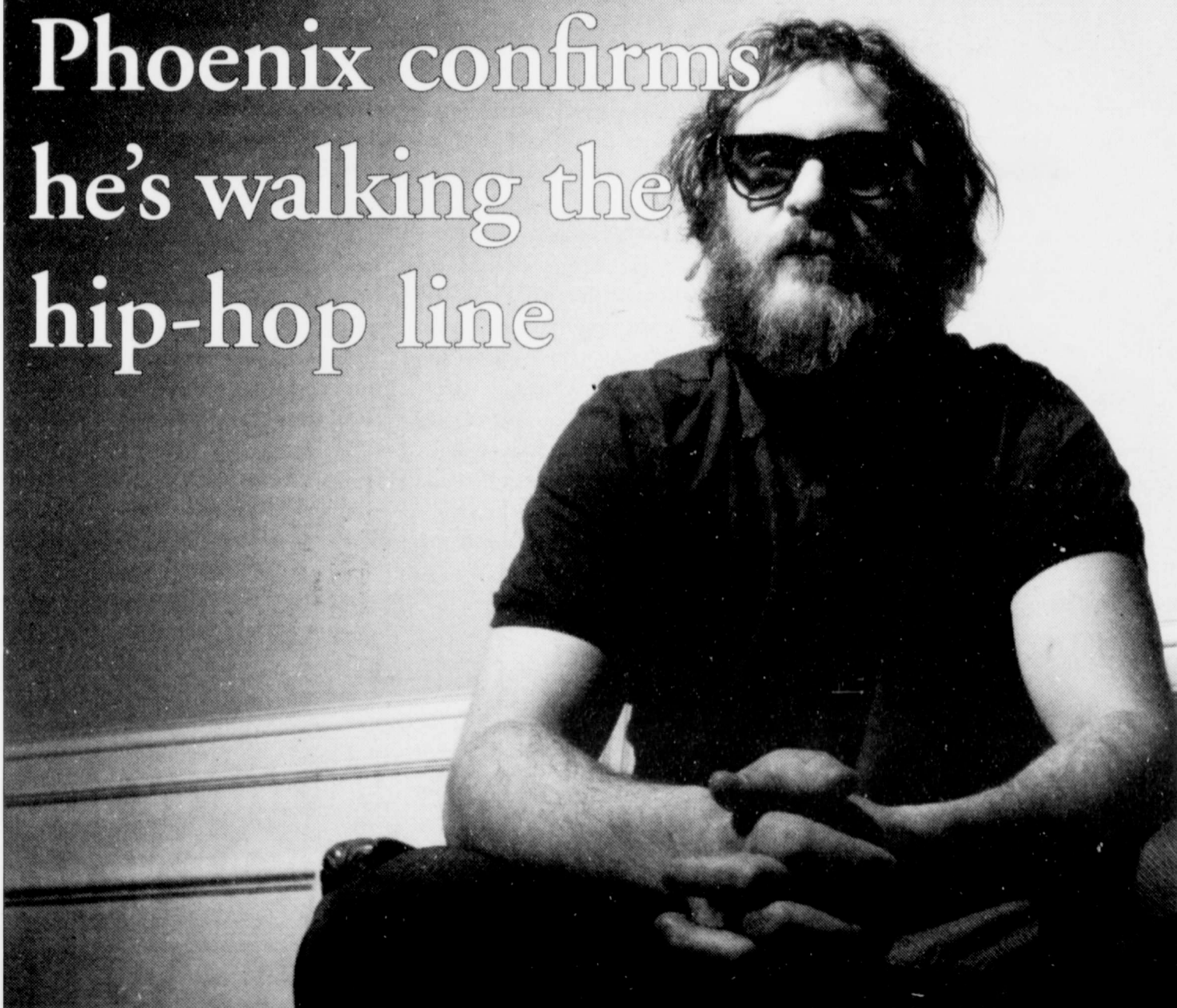
Powell was the 2007 Black Music Awards Spoken Word Artist of the Year and 2006 Oakland/San Francisco Grand Slam Champion. He was recommended by students to perform at the event, which is a time to remember, reflect and praise African-Americans who have changed the world.

Multicultural Center student coordinator Saba Abuhay said that she is excited to have Powell perform and is hopeful the performance will be among the best events the Multicultural Center has hosted.

"The Multicultural Center wants to keep students updated and aware by looking out for all up-and-coming artists and fresh faces. We are excited when the campus is enthusiastic; peer support gives us the energy and drive to host better events every time," she said.

The event will take place at 7:30 p.m. today in Chumash Auditorium and is free and open to the public.

Phoenix confirms he's walking the hip-hop line



MATT SAYLES ASSOCIATED PRESS

Actor Joaquin Phoenix poses for a portrait in Beverly Hills Calif., on Tuesday.

David Germain
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — Joaquin Phoenix says there's no hoax about it: He really has given up acting to become a hip-hop musician.

Phoenix has been spending his time laying down tracks for a rap album in the recording studio he built at his home, the two-time Academy Award nominee said Tuesday in an interview to promote what he claims is his final movie, "Two Lovers."

After video hit the Internet last month capturing part of Phoenix's debut rap performance at a Las Vegas club, speculation swirled that he was perpetrating an elaborate practical joke.

"I don't know where that comes from," Phoenix said. "If it comes from people that I've had a falling out with, that are (ticked) off at me?"

The video shows Phoenix, in a long, scraggly beard,

rapping nearly inaudibly and ends with him losing his footing and falling off the stage. It was an inauspicious start, but Phoenix was adamant that his hip-hop career is real.

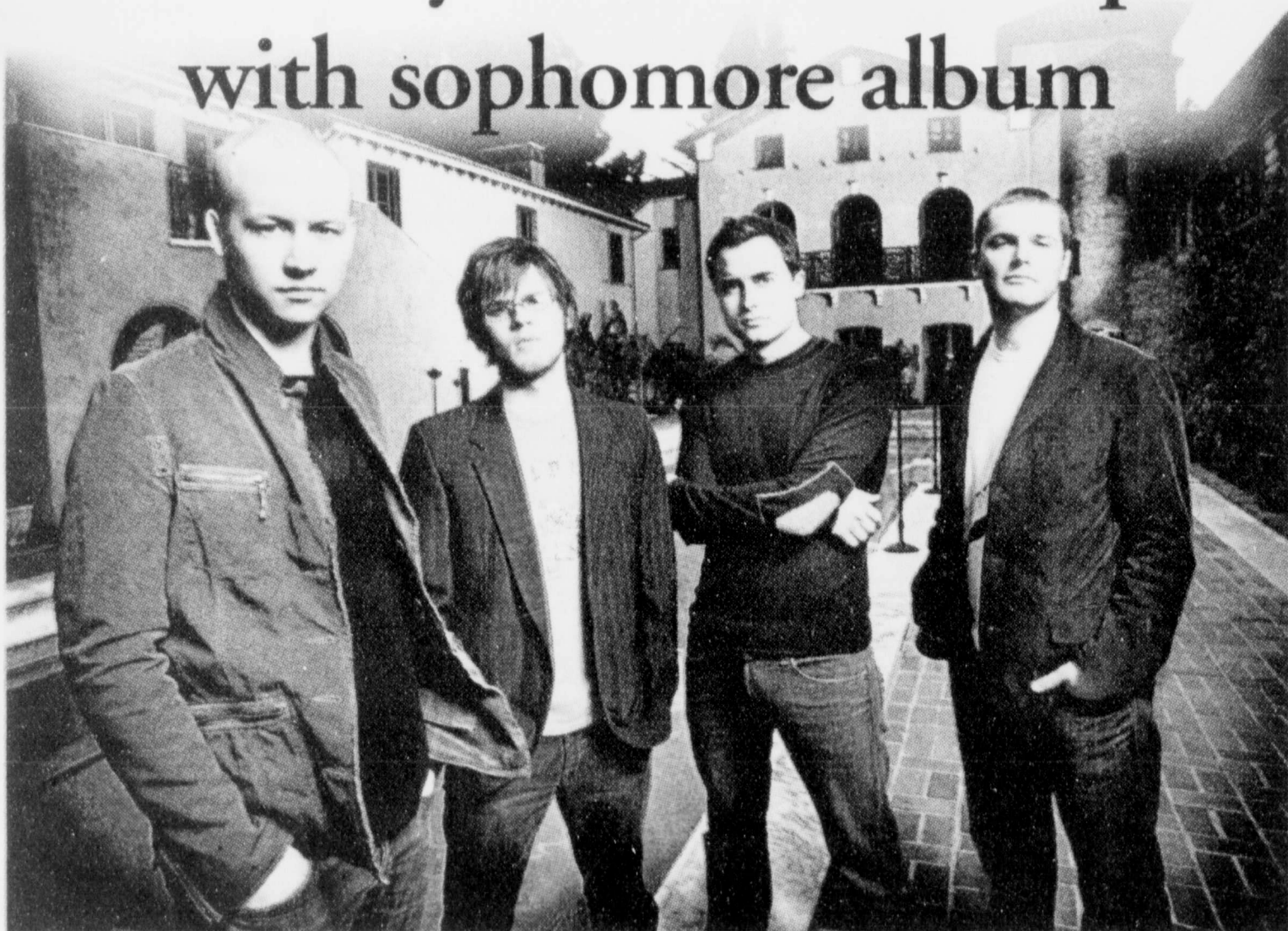
"There's not a hoax," Phoenix said. "Might I be ridiculous? Might my career in music be laughable? Yeah, that's possible, but that's certainly not my intention."

Phoenix's friend and brother-in-law, Casey Affleck, was on hand with a camera crew as he did interviews for "Two Lovers." Affleck, who is shooting a documentary about Phoenix's transition to music, said his friend is completely serious.

Phoenix, 34, said he had not expected anyone to care when he made the surprise announcement last fall that he was quitting Hollywood for music. At the time, fans assumed he might build on the country

see Phoenix, page 6

The Fray stick to the script with sophomore album



COURTESY PHOTO

Matt Love

THE DIAMONDBACK (U. MARYLAND)

Unlike most bands, The Fray's greatest flaw is widely known: The group works with a serious lack of variety. This seems to have been the most recurring criticism of the group's debut album, "How to Save a Life," and it is again the biggest problem on the band's self-titled sophomore effort.

"The Fray" should have been a redefining album for a band with some promise, but instead it plays as another humdrum collection of bittersweet anthems. There is practically no thematic contrast between "The Fray" and "How to Save a Life."

This is perhaps no more evident than in the first single, "You Found Me" — a track built on formula.

Just like previous Fray singles, it starts with a piano intro quickly followed by electric guitar riffs and drums that wind up to anthem-like choruses always marked by cymbal crashes. At some point, the song works its way to a climax, breaks down to just piano and vocals and

then hits the final chorus with even more melancholic vigor.

In fact, this is pretty much the formula for the entire album, give or take a few details. The songs aren't bad — in fact, the band is pretty talented at laying down intricate melodies and constructing catchy riffs. But the group's elaborate anthems lose context amid predictability and monotony, and eventually the entire album becomes tiresome.

And it isn't just the physical sound that seems mechanical. "The Fray" also employs the same themes and lyrical style as "How to Save a Life." Lead singer Isaac Slade is still crooning about longing and friendship in the same breathy vocals and melancholic tone. When he sings, "Lost and insecure/ You found me/ You found me," he might as well be singing, "Everyone knows I'm in/ Over my head/ Over my head," or any other vague go-to phrase from a sorrowful list. It really doesn't make a difference.

Perhaps it's because The Fray simply cannot strike up a tone other than bittersweet. Even the album's final song, ironically titled "Hap-

piness," is melancholy. Slade sings, "Happiness feels a lot like sorrow/ Let it be, you can't make it come or go/ But you are gone, not for good, but for now/ And gone for now feels a lot like gone for good." Some happiness.

So The Fray have made very little progress since its debut, but this isn't the real tragedy. No, the problem comes in the lack of deviation from form throughout the album, save for a few rare moments.

In the slow, swinging "Ungodly Hour," The Fray abandons its obsession with the sensational and creates a beautifully bare and honest song. Slade even loses his breathy whine for clear vocals, while drums roll smoothly in the background and the guitar lightly plucks out riffs. The song never builds and feels more natural than any of the album's previous power anthems. The effect is mesmerizing and reveals a band with a great potential for songwriting.

But this realization just makes the album's failure even more evident.

It really is hard to blame The Fray, though. The band has found its winning combination, which may be enough to capture American airwaves for a time — but it's not enough to sustain a full-length record.

Kennedy

continued from page 5

tion. Kaiser is also credited with rescuing London's Royal Opera House and the Alvin Ailey Dance Company in New York.

Kaiser's first piece of advice for struggling groups: Focus on generating revenue.

"Too often the nature of survival is to focus on cutting costs," he said. "The second is when we do have to cut costs, cut programming last, not first. I fear that's not what's happening now."

Cutting back on artistic innovations and programming makes it harder for a group to recover and compete for funding, he said "and you appear as a less exciting organization" a mantra Kaiser repeats from lessons developed through the Kennedy Center's arts management institute.

The center's designation as a presidential memorial gives it some federal funding and stability, but the bulk of the center's \$150 million annual budget must be raised privately. And yet, it's not immune to money troubles. In 1990, the center was suffering under a \$15 million debt and \$30 million in long-delayed repairs and needed Congress to help dig it out. More recently, Kaiser began trimming the budget by 5 percent in early 2008, anticipating the recession.

Still, he found two donors to cover the cost of helping other

struggling arts groups.

One arts group learned what it was like to suffer a crippling blow even before the recession took hold: The Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, which lost its home to Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and had its musicians, who own the company, scattered across the region.

But the musician-owned group rebuilt, with help from Kaiser, by becoming more mobile, playing in 22 different venues around seven parishes. Many times the group has played in Baptist churches instead of concert halls, reaching new audiences at the same time.

"We didn't have a lot to lose. We had everything to gain," said Babs Mollere, the orchestra's managing director. Now the group is bracing for tough times in 2009. "We talk about the second hurricane taking place with the economic scene," she said.

Congress included \$50 million in its economic stimulus package for the National Endowment for the Arts, which arts advocates say could save more than 14,000 jobs in local arts groups. The money was removed, though, from a Senate version of the bill and has become a target for some who want to cut wasteful spending, making any boost in arts funding uncertain.

"I've never seen it as bad as this," Kaiser said. Some groups have done better with budgeting a cushion of cash reserves, but others need help, he said. "If too many get ill, it's bad for the entire arts world."

Phoenix

continued from page 5

roots he laid down playing Johnny Cash in "Walk the Line," on which he learned to play guitar and did his own singing.

His new rap persona added to the confusion, but Phoenix said he is a longtime fan of hip-hop, speaking fervently about Public Enemy, Ice Cube and other artists he admires.

Phoenix said he has no intention of returning to film after "Two Lovers," a romantic drama co-starring Gwyneth Paltrow and reuniting him with James Gray, his director on "The Yards" and "We Own the Night." The movie opens Feb. 13.

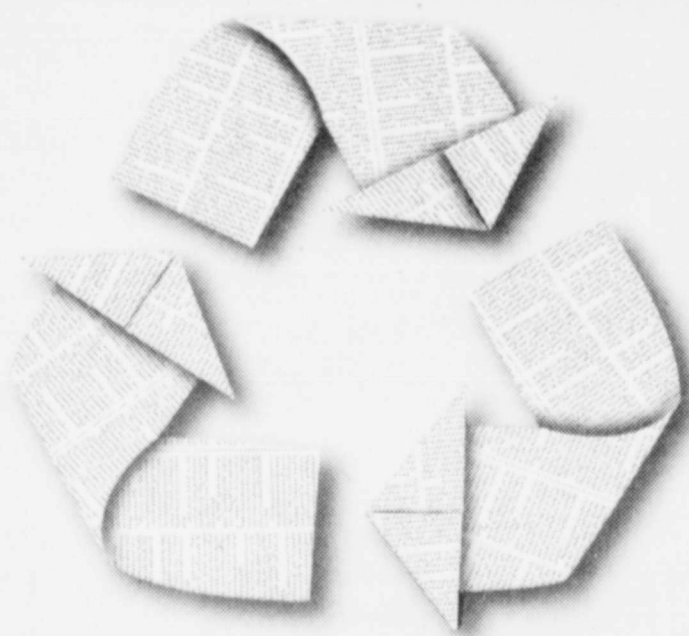
While Phoenix regrets that his coming-out party as a rapper came through poor-quality video

over the Internet, he said people would have ridiculed him no matter how good his debut was.

"It sucks that, yeah, the footage is out there as like this incredibly bad sound, and you literally can't hear what's happening," said Phoenix, who still has his bushy beard. "It was much better in the club, and I don't know who said that people were booing ... because that was not happening."

"Unless, of course, it's a pretty big place, and maybe it was happening," Phoenix added, laughing. "But it was not my experience. My experience afterward was I had a lot of dudes come up and say, 'We really respect you for doing it, putting yourself out there, and going with it.' Because I think true hip-hop heads know that it's hard, it's going to be a hard transition, and people are going to be lining up just to make fun of me."

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comic column

I am a disappointed nerd

COMIC BOOK RELIEF

POW!

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BAM!

BY JON MONTEITH

PRODUCED BY MUSTANG DAILY

Let me warn you: this story is not only going to be a complete nerd rant but will also contain quite a few spoilers about Grant Morrison's recent work of "Batman R.I.P."

I am a huge fan of Batman. He is one of those iconic characters that has been around for almost 70 years but new artists and writers have been able to still make interesting. I mean, just look at how well "The Dark Knight" did last summer. Besides the praise, though, I was sorely disappointed with Morrison's recent take on Batman.

Apparently, "Batman R.I.P." has been in the works for a few years now and is meant to be the end of Batman as we know him. Basically it deals with Batman encountering the Black Glove organization, led by a mysterious Dr. Hurt, who attempts to destroy Batman both physically and mentally.

For those of you who may not know, Batman is a little paranoid, to put it lightly. According to "Batman R.I.P.," Batman created

an infallible system for himself in the case of going insane. The system was that of Batman Zur-En-Arrh, a more primitive form of Batman that would take over in case he lost his identity.

Batman Zur-En-Arrh is actually a throwback to an old Batman story, which is kind of cool, but the allusion doesn't really go anywhere. Also, Batman dies in issue 681, but is alluded to have lived in the final panels. This crap can't get much worse.

Throughout the story there are many allusions to Dr. Hurt actually being Thomas Wayne, Bruce Wayne's father. At the end of the last issue, 681, in Batman's final confrontation with Dr. Hurt, Hurt explains to Batman that he planned the murder of Martha and Bruce Wayne, but Joe Chill, the hired killer, lost his nerve, and Thomas Wayne faked his own death. This of course, and thankfully, ended up not being true. If that had been true, it would have single-handedly destroyed the past 70 years of why Bruce Wayne became Batman.

Batman's entire motivation for deciding to fight crime, to prevent anything like that happening again, would have been destroyed. That would have been akin to somehow Uncle Ben not dying and Spiderman was just fighting crime for the hell of it. Honestly, you have no idea how ticked off I would be if that were the case.

I'm getting a little tired of all these huge, universe-changing storylines they have been tossing out in comics these days. Don't even get me started about "Final Crisis," in DC Comics or "Secret



COURTESY PHOTO

Invasion" in Marvel. Can't superheroes just do what they do best, by kicking the crap out of super villains? Apparently not.

I also have to say, Morrison's writing in this story is just, well, bad. I understand that the story deals with Batman losing his mind, but much of the time I was just confused to the point of almost giving up on the whole thing. I kept giving it a shot when the new issues came out every month, but I just became progressively more disappointed every time.

I'm a little curious to see where Batman goes from here, but whatever happens, it's not looking good. My suggestion, if you are hankering for some Batman action, is to stick with "Batman Detective Comics," for what little time we have left with this once great hero.

Jon Monteith is a history senior and Mustang Daily comic book reviewer.

COMIC BOOK RELEASE

COMPILED BY JON MONTEITH

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February 4, 2009
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Mustang Daily

"I wish there was something I could grow to make me look older."

MUSTANG DAILY OPINION/EDITORIAL

Wednesday, February 4, 2009

Editor in chief: Marlice van Romburgh
Managing Editor: Giana Magnoli

mustangdaily@gmail.com

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8

An open letter to a congressman

*Until now you have chosen how much we spend,
you have chosen who receives the monies we earned,
and you have chosen to neglect the voices of the people footing your bill,
we the people.*

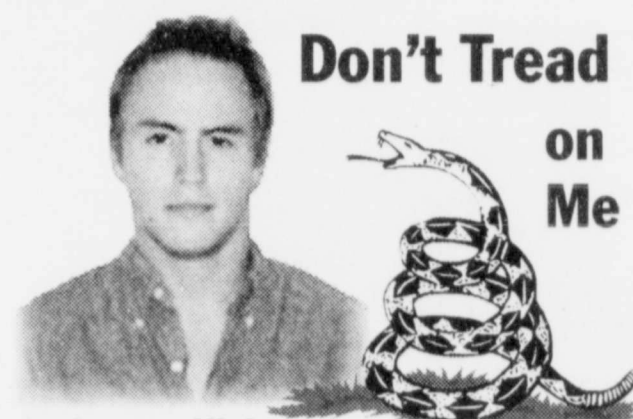
Dear Representative,
The following words are written on behalf of the remaining men and women of our country that believe in the sanctity of law and the God-given rights enumerated to all in the U.S. Constitution. Though you have undoubtedly received letters in previous years requesting handouts, favors and preferential treatment from your constituents, this letter is different, this letter is unique, this letter is just. Within it is a request that can be fulfilled without the grievances of fellow citizens, without the labor of other workers and without a perversion of the rule of law.

On behalf of my fellow Americans, I humbly request to be excluded from the financing of the so-called stimulus package. It is not because we do not wish for our economy to be stimulated or that we object to the trillions in spending ready to commence; it is because funneling money to special interests is unethical, doling out cash to irresponsible people and businesses is not smart, and refusing to give us a say in the matter is not

fair. Until now you have chosen how much we spend, you have chosen who receives the monies we earned, and you have chosen to neglect the voices of the people footing your bill, we the people.

We wish to choose as well. We wish to voice our opinion, not just with our calls and our letters, but with our pocketbooks, at our own will. We do not wish for you to judge on our behalf and at our expense the best course of action — we wish to judge for ourselves.

You should need no reminding that the U.S. government is in need of a stimulus greater than all the failing businesses combined. It is you and your esteemed colleagues that have run this great ship aground with your reckless spending on requests of handouts and favors from your constituents. It is you that was too spineless to say "no." It is you that has lived beyond your means to the point of crippling our country with debt. If spending was actually a solution to this problem, then the problem would never have begun in the first place; we cannot spend our way out of debt, and we cannot print our way into prosperity.



by Jeremy Hicks

This letter is requesting on behalf of millions of Americans not another handout or favor, or the perversion of the law for our benefit; we simply request not to be collectively subjected to additional debt for increased government wastefulness that will benefit a few at our expense. On behalf of millions of disgruntled Americans, I request that you acknowledge the unwillingness of we the people to participate in the further encroachment of our sovereignty and vote against the stimulus package.

Respectfully,
Jeremy Hicks

Jeremy Hicks is a 2008 political science graduate, the founder of the Cal Poly Libertarian Club and a Mustang Daily political columnist.

your turn

send us a copy of your open letter to congress with your thoughts on the stimulus bill

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Considering that the majority of our university is comprised of engineers, architects and agriculture students, I would venture that you are in the minority of students "grudgingly making (your) way to class" next Friday. As much as I know as an electrical engineering student, I've never had my Fridays off. Consider yourself lucky, or blessed, because in the real world people work 40-plus hours per week, often into the weekends. There is no sense of entitlement to receive your Friday Funday off, only that you are serendipitously still employed (in this economy doubly so). Besides, we still have Feb. 16 off to honor President's Day and "appreciate the contributions" of our past presidents.

— Jacob Kory

Response to "A double dose of the Mondays"

I might not have seen the debate between James Fell and John McCardell, but Fell's words ring true like the ding after walking through the door at a 7-Eleven. According to his clearly tedious research, two major results of setting the drinking age at 21 is "a reduction in alcohol consumption by those under 21, and... a reduction in drinking and driving related fatal crashes by those under 21," showing he spent his time and money well. I also heard that raising the driving age to 18 might reduce the risk of 16-year-olds falling asleep behind the wheel, but I'll leave the "facts" to him.

— Mike Eichermueller

Response to "Video: 18 or 21? The great drinking age debate"

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BLOG

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Let all smokers be judged equally, famous or not

Oh, how we like to bring our heroes down. Forget his eight gold medals in Beijing, forget the fact that just five months ago we were parading him around as a national icon, a superhuman athlete and an Olympic story for the history books. In the eyes of the righteous, all of that glory is now overshadowed by the looming image of our hero taking a bong hit.

Oh my. With all the brouhaha surrounding the photo of Michael Phelps smoking pot, you'd think he actually harmed someone.

He didn't. Phelps smoked a little weed at a college party, and the media wouldn't have been the wiser except for some goody-two-shoes with a camera phone.

He's never tried to dispute the legitimacy of the photo and quickly issued a brief apology admitting that it was bad judgment on his part: "I'm 23 years old and despite the successes I've had in the pool, I acted in a youthful and inappropriate way, not in a manner people have come to expect from me. For this, I am sorry. I promise my fans and the public it will not happen again."

With marijuana now essentially ingrained in pop culture, and with an estimated 83 million Americans having consumed it, why all the fuss? There are comedies about it — although they're never any good — ranging from the most recent "Pineapple Express" to the slightly more classic Harold and Kumar movies. According to the wise Wikipedia.com, "humans have been consuming cannabis since prehistory," and the even wiser National Household Survey on Drug Abuse reports that 37 percent of Americans age 12 and older have tried marijuana at least once.

If the answer to the Phelps' pot commotion is that we hold Olympic athletes at a different moral standard than ourselves, I have to wonder about the morality of an ethical standard that doesn't pass the universality

test. Phelps is a young man, and albeit his extraordinary swimming abilities, he never asked for preferential treatment beyond his status as an Olympian. To condemn him for smoking pot while college students his age across the country do it every day is plain hypocritical.

Of course, we must not forget that marijuana is illegal, at least in the eyes of the federal government. Now, whether a law governing what an individual may freely choose to consume is constitutional... well, that's another matter and another column altogether.

There is already talk that many of Phelps' corporate sponsors may not renew their contracts with him, and that's certainly understandable. After all, no sensible business wants to be seen as condoning illegal or controversial behavior.

But the condemnation of Phelps is even more ironic given the great

many celebrities and even politicians that partake in socially questionable behavior. Our newly inaugurated president admitted to having done cocaine during his youth, and now resorts to lighting up a cigarette when the urge hits him — a substance that is arguably more harmful

than marijuana but just so happens to be legal. Who really even knows what George W. Bush did during his youthfully rebellious college days? And then of course there's Bill Clinton who "didn't inhale" and John Kerry who "didn't like it." Let's not even get into some of the more musically-inclined pot smokers — the most famous of which I think would wisely say, "Let it be."

But yes, by all means, let's crucify America's most extraordinary athlete over a little weed. Anything to preserve the status quo, right?

Marlize van Romburgh is a journalism senior and the Mustang Daily editor in chief.

To condemn him for smoking pot while college students his age across the country do it every day is plain hypocritical.

political cartoon

CHRIS SHARRON DAILY KENT STATER



Facebook "25 things about me" serves as selfish cry for attention

Michelle Hipps

INDEPENDENT FLORIDA ALLIGATOR (U. OF FLORIDA)

This "25 things about me" list has taken over Facebook with everyone and their mother writing about themselves and tagging me.

Do these people think I want to know if they are addicted to www.icanhascheezburger.com? Wonder no more. I didn't.

Why do people feel the need to share things about themselves? Are they looking for admiration, a pat on the back, what?

I refuse to relent simply because they feel like they need a spotlight. Don't tag me if you're looking for an audience.

The whole idea is egotistical. I've been told that people just want to share themselves with others, but they really just want the attention.

That's what it's all about and I refuse to acknowledge anyone's "me list."

So, to the people who have participated in this Facebook phenomenon: If people want to get to know you, they will. If you wrote this list because you felt like no one was interested in your life, take a hint; maybe your life isn't interesting.

Interesting people don't have to advertise that they're interesting. Maybe you should pick up a hobby or join a club. Maybe you should invest in other people. That's a novel idea. Tagging people and obligating them to comment doesn't count.

If you really crave attention, feedback or whatever, become another Mother Teresa. Do something productive and worthwhile with your time instead of devoting it to something about you. Why can't we write

lists about each other?

We all spend enough time on ourselves. Why are we creating lists about ourselves?

I can't wrap my mind around the idea. Who do you think is going to read it? I've read two of them and I stopped less than a quarter of the way through out of boredom.

I asked one friend why she did it, and she said, "Well I had to sound just as good as everyone else." Why? Who are these people that you have to build yourself up for?

What happened to actions speaking louder than words? I determine the character of a person based on what they do rather than what is said or written about them.

Every one of us is unique and has a lot more than this "25 things about me" list can offer. We need to take the focus off ourselves and shift it to the person next to us. Focus on the person who needs a friend or the person who dropped their books and needs help picking them up. Focus on anything but yourself.

Our world accommodates far too much "me" thinking, and it has been to our detriment. We are consumed with ourselves and have forgotten how far helping others can reach. The 45 minutes you spent writing your "you list" could have been spent volunteering at the St. Francis House or writing a letter to your local firefighters thanking them for their tireless efforts.

You could have made a difference with that time. I encourage you to think about that the next time you get tagged in one of those "you lists."

Michelle Hipps is a contributor to the Independent Florida Alligator at University of Florida.

winter 2009 columnist schedule

mondays

bi-weekly



That's What She Said

by Rachel Newman

tuesdays



by members of the Empower Poly Coalition

wednesdays



Don't Tread on Me

by Jeremy Hicks

thursdays



The Liberal Lens

by Stephanie England



The Constitutional Conservative

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Marci's Word of the Week

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Pop Culture Shock Therapy by Doug Bratton



When the Joker Takes His Anti-Psychotic Meds

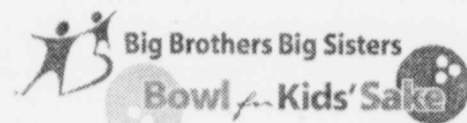
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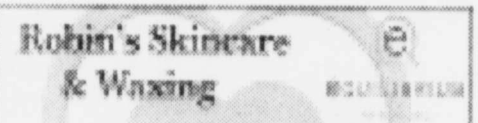
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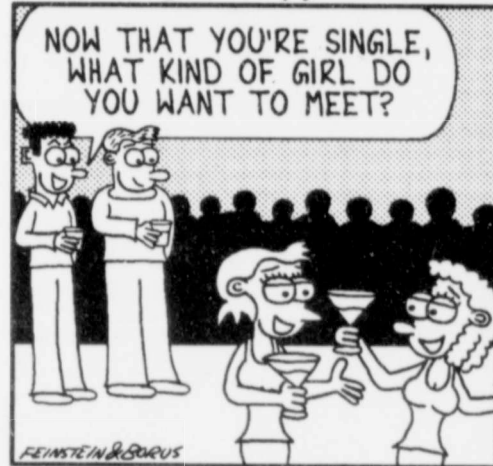
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Girls & Sports by Justin Borus and Andrew Feinstein



Dodgers

continued from page 12

per season.

"We'd love to sign Manny," McCourt told MLB.com. "But we have to be prudent with our decisions. This is about winning now, but also in the future."

Colletti initially tried to re-sign the left fielder, offering a two-year, \$45 million deal with a buyout or a club option that was ignored by Ramirez's agent Scott Boras and later withdrawn by the team.

"The agent is challenging to work with and we've tried hard," McCourt told MLB.com. "We've made three efforts and we still have not received a specific number from the agent, and I don't know what to tell you."

The Dodgers' second attempt involved salary arbitration in December, but Ramirez said no to that, too.

The San Francisco Giants have confirmed interest in Ramirez, but like the Dodgers, they are believed to be reluctant to guarantee a long-term deal.

New York general manager Brian Cashman reiterated Tuesday that the Yankees will not pursue Ramirez.

"We've secured the areas of need and hopefully put ourselves in a better position," Cashman said. "We're not planning on any major league free agents other than non-roster invites."

The length of the deal seems to be the sticking point between the Dodgers and Ramirez, who created a buzz upon arriving in Los Angeles from Boston at the July 31 trade deadline.

Ramirez hit .396 with 17 homers, 53 RBIs, 36 runs scored, 74 hits and 35 walks in 53 regular-season games, leading the Dodgers to the NL West title.

He was even more potent in the postseason, hitting .520 with four homers, 10 RBIs, nine runs scored and 11 walks in eight playoff games.

Ramirez made a huge impact on the Dodgers' bottom line, with a big boost in attendance and souvenir sales, including No. 99 jerseys and fake dreadlocks.

But the latest rejection seems to signal that Ramirez remains intent on locking up a long-term deal that would take him through age 40.

"This is what I would call a 'deliberate market,'" Boras said Tuesday. "There's players ending up with market contracts."

Los Angeles manager Joe Torre and some of the Dodgers players have said

they want Ramirez back.

The latest rejection "doesn't mean he's not coming back. They're still talking and that's what negotiations are all about," Torre said at a signing for his new book in New York.

"I've talked to him a couple of times. He enjoyed his experience. He'd like to come back, but again, this is the business part of it. Hopefully things can get worked out."

Ramirez is even getting job-hunting help from Albert Pujols.

The St. Louis slugger passed along Ramirez's telephone number to Cardinals manager Tony La Russa.

"I speak with Manny every three days and he tells me, 'Man, no one wants to sign me,'" Pujols said last week in the Dominican Republic. "I'm not an agent or general manager, but I can't understand how Manny has not signed."

—Associated Press Baseball Writers
Ronald Blum and Mike Fitzpatrick and
Sports Writer Rick Freeman contributed to this report.

Raiders

continued from page 12

notably picked veteran offensive coach Paul Hackett to be JaMarcus Russell's quarterbacks coach.

With a head coach finally in place, the Raiders can get to work hiring coordinators. They're also deep in preparations for the draft, in which they have the seventh overall pick.

Cable went 11-35 in four seasons in charge at Idaho from 2000-03 in his only previous experience as a head coach before Davis promoted him to replace Kiffin, who was fired Sept. 30 after a series of embarrassing public disagreements with Davis. Cable spent 2006 as Atlanta's offensive line coach following two years as UCLA's offensive coordinator.

The Raiders responded favorably to Cable over the final

12 games of the regular season, pulling together for back-to-back wins over Houston and Tampa Bay to close another dismal year on a high note. Although 5-11 isn't much, Oakland finished with its best record since 2004, when Norv Turner led the Raiders to the same mark.

Cable follows Bill Callahan (2002-03), Turner (2004-05), Art Shell (2006) and Kiffin (2007-08) in charge of the Raiders, who haven't had a winning season since Callahan led Oakland to the Super Bowl in his first season after replacing Jon Gruden.

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3	6	8	9	1	4	2	5	7

Shotwell

continued from page 12

caught the eye of many NFL scouts, he stood out to Walsh.

"I met him at my press conference, and I just love the way he presented himself," Walsh said. "That's the way you want your coaches to present themselves and those are the people you want to be around."

Shotwell said that his experience practicing at the upmost level will give him credibility with the players he coaches, "even with the guys we talk of at USC or Cal, or other big Pac-10 schools because I've played at a level even they haven't played at."

Shotwell has plenty of experience at the college level as well. He made 122 tackles including 21 for losses and seven sacks as a senior en route to winning the Buck Buchanan Award, an honor given to the best defender in the Football Championship Subdivision (formerly Division I-AA). Shotwell also had a career-high 11 solo tackles, five for losses in Cal Poly's upset of Football Bowl Subdivision's (formerly Division I-A) San Diego State.

He was named a first-team All-American in 2006, and after his senior season played in the East-West Shrine Game in Houston where he was the game's leading tackler.

Although he just started his coaching career, Shotwell said growing up in Goleta, Calif. following the rich tradition of the USC program and having a father who played for Cal set those schools at the top, along with eventually head coaching at Cal Poly as his future coaching aspirations.

"That would be my Army for coach Ellerson," he said.

Former football head coach Rich Ellerson left Cal Poly to become head coach of the United States Military Academy at West Point in December. It was an expected move because of his family ties to the school.

But for now Shotwell is embarking on a new stage in his life with a new head coach and a young team that he said is confident can continue the winning tradition, or even surpass that of Ellerson's.




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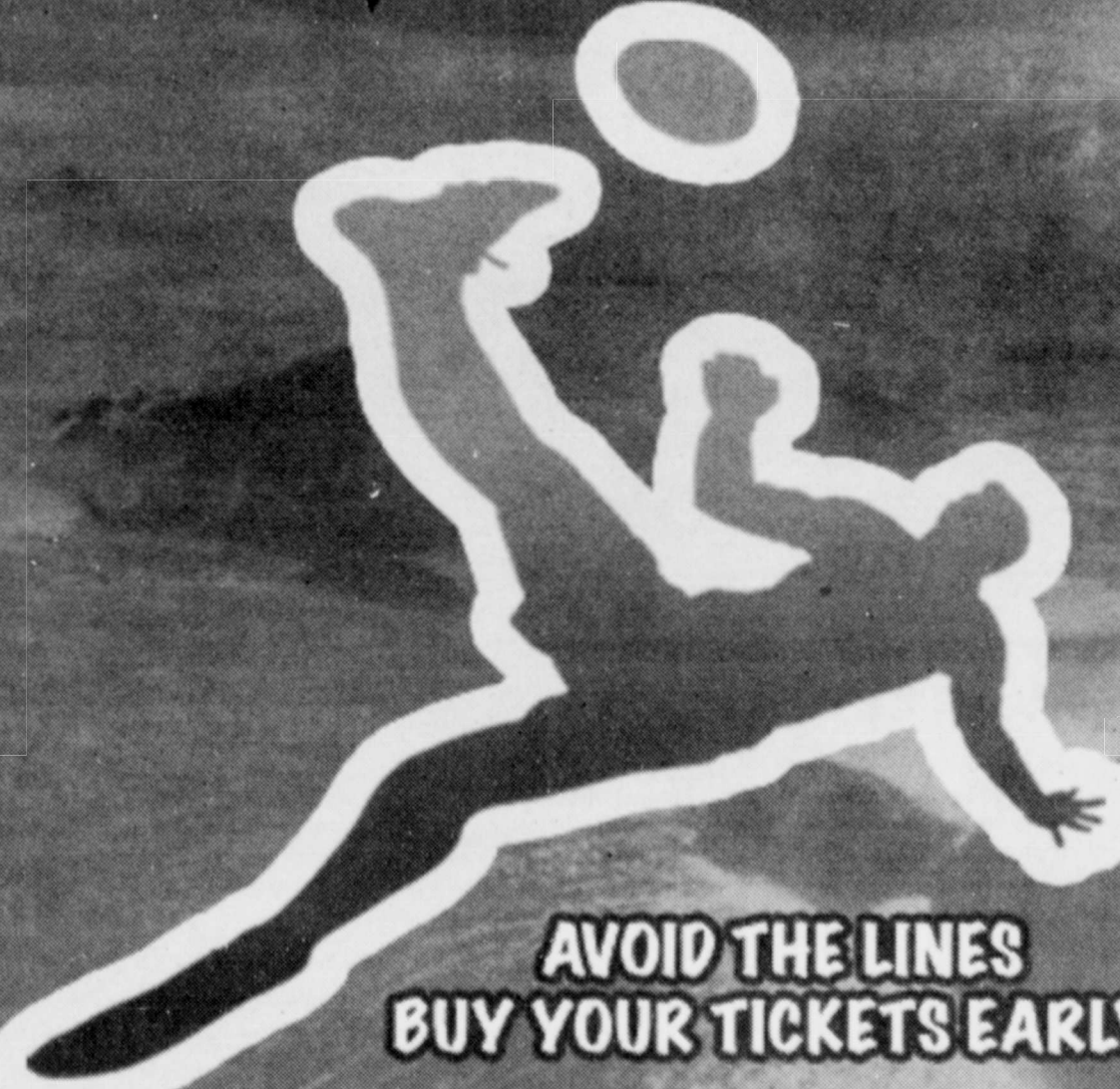





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football

Shotwell to roam sidelines again



ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO
Former Colts linebacker Kyle Shotwell, left, sacks Bengals quarterback Ryan Fitzpatrick during a preseason game on Aug. 28, 2008.

Omar Sanchez
MUSTANG DAILY

Kyle Shotwell's days of fighting for an NFL roster spot are over. The 2006 Buck Buchanan Award winner and former Cal Poly linebacker reunited with his alma mater's gridiron squad earlier this month when new head football coach Tim Walsh welcomed him back to the Mustang

family as an assistant coach.

A family reunion indeed; Shotwell has two brothers on the team: junior defensive lineman Ryan, and freshman offensive lineman Troy who both said their brother's decision to give up his pursuit to play Sunday nights was the right one.

"No offense to Kyle, but everybody thinks that the NFL lifestyle is really fancy, fun and cool; but it really wasn't. It was a lot of hard work," Ryan said after watching the grueling routine his brother had to go through for a minimal return.

"You're living in a city where you don't really have any friends, any family and your teammates don't give a hoot about you. I can see why he made the decision to start coaching... no amount of money can replace your happiness," he added.

Since signing with the Oakland Raiders as an undrafted free agent in 2007, the former Cal Poly linebacker has signed deals with four other teams. As recently as two months ago, he was on the Kansas City Chiefs practice squad, but was unable to crack an NFL team's active roster during his time in the league.

Once the toast of Cal Poly football, Shotwell said he never felt more overlooked and felt it was time to move on.

"Basically I got worn out of being the first guy cut and the last guy signed," he said. "When you live like that for two years, it starts to wear on you."

Now that he finds himself guiding from the sideline, he admits as a coach he will be more sympathetic to a walk-on, because he too wasn't a highly recruited player.

"I'm going to keep my eyes open to the characteristics that I saw in myself, and char-

I'm going to keep my eyes open to the characteristics that I saw in myself.

—Kyle Shotwell
Cal Poly assistant coach

acteristics that I believe don't necessarily show up on a stat sheet," he added. "Something that's within a guy that can make him an astounding football player."

Troy, the youngest of the Shotwell brothers, doesn't see himself getting any special treatment

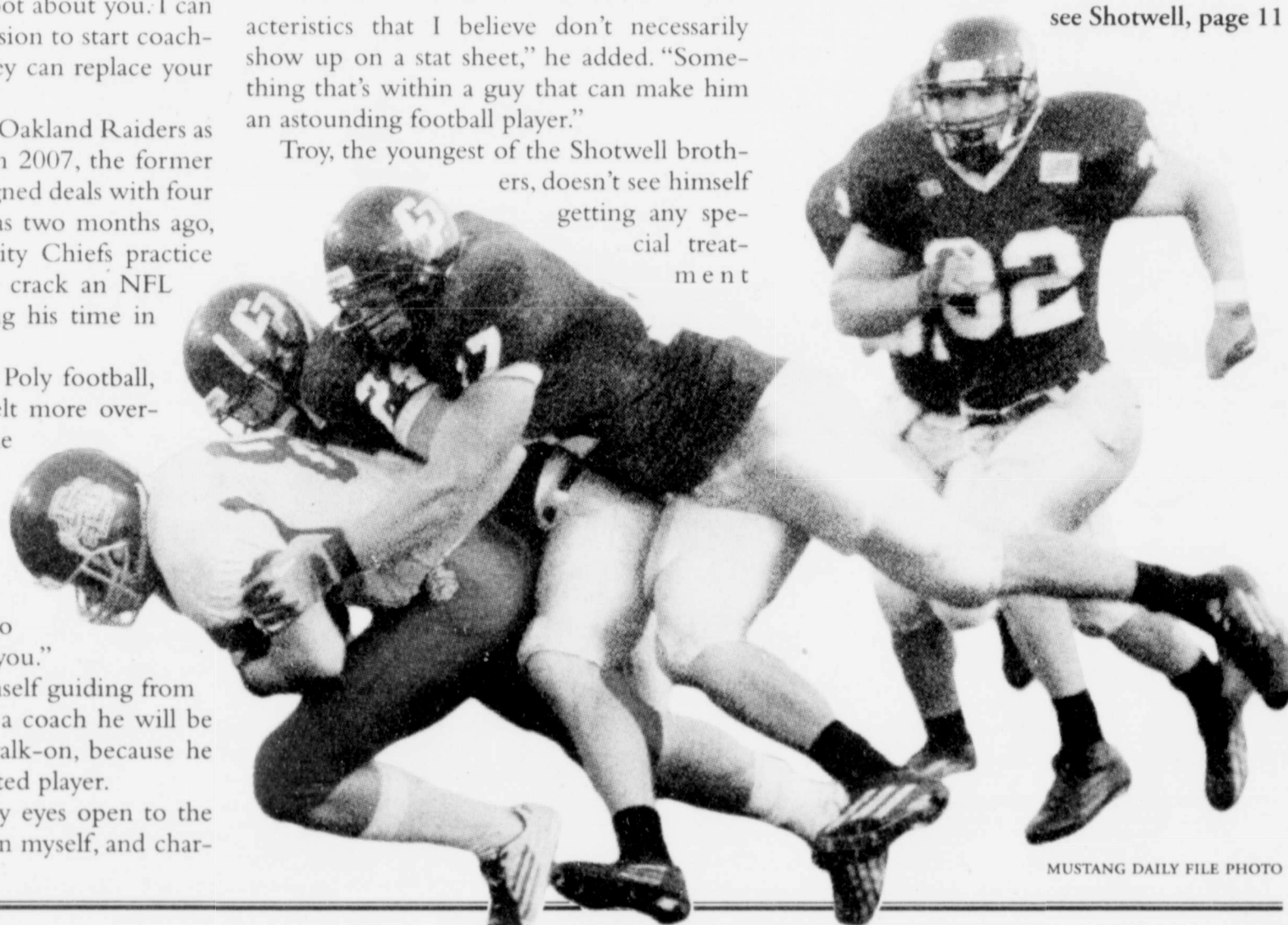
from his big brother.

"It's not as big of a deal as people think it is," Troy said. "Everybody thinks, at least for me, that he's going to give me a hard time or be harder on me because he's my brother, but he's doing a good job of treating me the same as he treats anybody else."

Troy is not alone when he said that his brother is doing a good job transitioning from player to coach.

"He knows Cal Poly, he knows what it takes, he knows the tradition of the football program and he's been a tremendous help for us in our first 14 days here," Walsh said.

Although Shotwell might not have
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MUSTANG DAILY FILE PHOTO

McCourt: Dodgers still want Ramirez

Beth Harris
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — The Dodgers are still trying to bring back Manny Ramirez. Only the enigmatic slugger doesn't like their latest deal.

He rejected their third offer — for one year — that would have made him baseball's second-highest paid player behind Alex Rodriguez.

That leaves Ramirez unsigned three months after deciding to test his value in the recession-plagued free agent market, with the Dodgers the only team to have confirmed making any offers.

"We have interest in signing Manny," general manager Ned Colletti told The Associated Press in an e-mail Tuesday. "We don't have a deadline but these situations can change in an instant and either side can change them in an instant."

The Dodgers open spring training for the first time in Arizona on Feb. 14.

Team owner Frank McCourt said the team still wants Ramirez back, but "at some point, we have to move on," he was quoted by MLB.com,



ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO
Manny Ramirez celebrates after scoring on a two-run double during game 3 of the National League Divisional Series last October.

which attended McCourt's hospital visit to cancer patients along with the Los Angeles Times on Tuesday.

The latest deal — a one-year, \$25 million offer — was rejected Monday. It would have given Ramirez the second-highest average salary behind New York Yankees third baseman Rodriguez's \$275 million, 10-year contract.

"We came up with what we thought was a creative proposal to

give him a lot of money, and well deserved in a challenging economy, and give him flexibility if he feels it's important to test free agency next year," McCourt told MLB.com. "I don't see long-term contracts happening in this market we're in."

Ramirez, who turns 37 in May, is believed to be seeking a four- or five-year deal starting at \$25 million

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Raiders keeping Tom Cable as head coach

Greg Beacham
ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Oakland Raiders retained head coach Tom Cable on Tuesday, officially removing the interim designation from his title more than five weeks after their season ended.

Cable went 4-8 after replacing Lane Kiffin with the Raiders (5-11), who have lost at least 11 games in six consecutive years. Cable, Kiffin's former offensive line coach, rallied Oakland to back-to-back victories to end last season.

Raiders owner Al Davis interviewed a handful of candidates for the job, but never seemed seriously inclined to replace Cable, valuing his organizational loyalty and leadership. Davis spoke to New York Giants offensive coordinator Kevin Gilbride and Green Bay assistant head coach Winston Moss before sticking with Cable, the former Idaho head coach who joined the Raiders in 2007.

Cable's hiring, to be announced

at a news conference on Wednesday, will bring some stability to a coaching staff that's already undergoing wholesale changes even with Cable staying in charge. Cable, who represented Oakland at the Senior Bowl in Alabama last month, has argued that keeping him would bring stability to a club already on its fifth head coach since 2003.

But several key assistant coaches who finished the season under Cable's leadership already have left the Raiders for new jobs, including defensive coordinator Rob Ryan (Cleveland), offensive coordinator Greg Knapp (Seattle), special teams coordinator Brian Schneider (Southern California), running backs coach Tom Rathman (San Francisco) and linebackers coach Don Martindale (Denver).

While waiting to announce Cable's hiring, Davis filled several positions on the Raiders' new staff, hiring a few new assistants and retaining several others. Oakland

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Tom Cable